**Sickle Cell Trait Information**

NCAA legislation beginning in 2009, recommends that all colleges and universities confirm the **Sickle Cell Trait** status of all student-athletes. The NCAA’s testing recommendation follows the latest guidelines from the National Athletic Trainers’ Association and the College of American Pathologists. Both NATA and CAP recommend screening for the Sickle Cell Trait if a student-athlete’s status is not known.

The sickle gene is common in people whose origin is from areas where malaria is widespread. The sickle gene is also present in those of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Indian, Caribbean, South/Central American ancestry or those of mixed blood lines. Sickle Cell Trait is the inheritance of one gene for sickle hemoglobin and one for normal hemoglobin. During intense or extensive exertion, the sickle hemoglobin can change the shape of red blood cells from round to quarter-moon, or “sickle.” This change, called Exertional Sickling, can pose a grave risk for some athletes. Athletes with the Sickle Cell Trait are more susceptible to heat related disorders and ischemic rhabdomyolysis - a rapid breakdown of muscle tissue.

In recent years, Exertional Sickling has contributed to the death of athletes, ages 12 through 19. Participation is athletics is allowed as long as proper precautions and activity modifications are followed to prevent such instances from occurring. In the event that an athlete is identified with the sickle cell trait, the athlete, parents, and coaches will be given information, clarification, and assistance on modifying activities to prevent Exertional Sickling.

All 50 states now require screening for “hemoglobinopathies” (genetic blood disorders) at birth, and Sickle Cell Trait is one of these issues. Some states have been requiring the testing longer than others. *If you are unaware of your status, this information should be available at either your family physician or pediatrician’s office or hospital of birth.*

In order to show compliance with this NCAA legislation, MSU is requiring **all** new student-athletes (*freshman and transfers*) to provide documentation of their Sickle Cell Trait status in order to begin their MSU eligibility.

Documentation includes any of the following.

1) A copy of a blood test for the sickle cell trait done at birth.
2) Proof of a sickle cell trait screen (Hemoglobin Solubility) done recently by your primary care physician. This is an inexpensive test blood test (about $20).
3) If an athlete’s physician does not have this information or will not order the test an athlete can check with community or state organizations which conduct free or low cost screenings for sickle cell disease and the trait.
4) Should it be necessary the testing is available through the MSU Health Center – which can be billed through insurance or paid for at the time of testing.

Please submit Sickle Cell Trait documentation to:

John Davis, MS, ATC  
Head Athletic Trainer  
Montclair State University  
Montclair, NJ 07043  
973-655-5250, fax 5436  
davisj@mail.montclair.edu

No student-athlete will be excluded from participation due to the result.

For more information on Sickle Cell Trait and Athletics please visit:

www.nata.org/statements/consensus/sicklecell.pdf  
www.scinfo.org/sicklept.htm  
www.ncaa.org/health-safety.